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America's out-of-control cop kill rate

BY [EDWARD PETER STRINGHAM](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Wednesday, June 3, 2015, 5:09 AM

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Too many kills

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This weekend, police in Long Beach, California [shot and killed](#) Feras Morad, a 20 year old college student who was on a balcony and unarmed, and police outside of Tulsa, Oklahoma [shot and killed](#) Nehemiah Fischer, a 35-year-old pastor when they were “rescuing” him from his flooded pickup truck. We hear of these and other high profile cases of police killings in Baltimore, Charleston, Ferguson or Staten Island — but few look at the larger picture of how often American citizens are killed by the very people they pay to protect them.

Journalists with both the Washington Post and the Guardian are organizing an [important databases of fatal police shootings](#) with information about the victims’ age, gender, location, race, and other circumstances. This is a tremendous step to shed light on the understudied question of how many people police kill.

The Washington Post [focuses on fatal police shootings](#) and watchdog organization Killed By Police includes all deaths at the hands of police; both help us calculate the rate at which police kill. In the United States, the overall homicide rate is 5 per 100,000. That means out of any given 100,000 Americans, five will be victims and (ignoring for the moment, perpetrators of multiple homicide) five people will commit homicide.

But what is the rate at which police kill citizens? Although [official statistics have historically been scant](#), we now know that [police killed 1,100 Americans in 2014](#) and 476 Americans in the first five months of 2015. Given that America has roughly [765,000 sworn police officers](#), that means the police-against-citizen kill rate is more than 145 per 100,000.

Let us put that into perspective. In most countries in Europe the national homicide rate is 1 per 100,000, so that means American police kill at 145 times the rate of the average European citizen. The two most violent countries in the world are Venezuela and Honduras with national homicide rates of 54 and 90 per 100,000. The U.S. government issues [travel warnings](#) stating: “The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens that the level of crime and violence in Honduras remains critically high” and “violent crime in Venezuela is pervasive.” If you are not comfortable vacationing in those countries, it is little wonder why [so many Americans are uncomfortable with police](#) who kill at more than 1.5 and 2.5 times the homicide rates of the two most violent countries.

The American police kill rate also compares poorly to the police kill rates in other countries. Nationwide in England and Wales, Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries police [average killing less than two people per year](#), giving police kill rates between a high of 9 per 100,000 in Denmark and a low of 1.6 per 100,000 in England and Wales. That means American police are killing citizens at a rate 15 times higher than police in Denmark and 90 times higher than police in England and Wales. For the first quarter of 2015, police in England and Wales have shot and killed a total of zero people, whereas American police killed 392 citizens in that time period. That rate is 205 kills per 100,000 police, infinitely

